

6 Gloria Place
East Haven, Conn.

November 3, 1970

Mr. Dan Ellsberg
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Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Dan:

Thanks for sending me the Chau material, and please pardon my telephone conversation. If I sounded completely disoriented, I was. It was a combination of my having been totally removed from Chay and Saigon politics for some months, a hard-of-hearing aunt, my having just walked in the door here after being away for a couple of weeks, and dental work that has left my mouth momentarily unresponsive to my usual commands. The net result was that I went completely blotto on Chau.

I really am pretty pessimistic about developing any pressures on his behalf. As you said, it's not the right issue for Ky. It's not the right issue for anybody, in fact, tactically. Big Minh? That's hard to imagine too. Even Tran Van Don, who will seize any cause, was uncharacteristically mute about Chau, even at the time of the trial. And Chau is too much of a loner to have anybody fight for him out of loyalty. Chau may himself be doggedly loyal to Diem's memory, but that unfortunately doesn't make even the old Diemists loyal to someone who wasn't really one of their gang, ~~was~~ and who has been talking to the Communists and got caught at it. The young Southerners protested vocally last March in both the Supreme Court appeal on the legality of lifting Chau's immunity and in interminable articles by Kieu Mong Thu in Tin Sang, but then that was on the rising ~~tide~~ opposition tide of last spring. And the young Southerners aren't strong enough to do anything themselves unless they are in league with others.

As for the Americans, the only person who has changed of the original decision makers is the political counselor. And the new one, Hitchcock, is too much Bunker's protege to push any politically speculative policy on his own, especially on something that Bunker got so mad about personally. (Nor does Hitchcock have the intuition for Vietnamese politics that might give him a feel for the Chau case despite official policy.) Plus without Richardson at the Washington end I should think it hopeless to attempt anything from there.

On Shaplen, I can't really offer any insight. I have been so completely out of touch with Vietnam these past months that I hadn't even caught up with his May and August pieces. I thought from talking to him in April that he was going to make a major play of Sen. Nghiem's speech on the Chau trial, as he had asked me to observe an embargo on the speech for a couple of weeks until he could use it. I knew he considered Chau a relatively minor figure, but I'm really astounded that his approach to the case was bravery by the Supreme Court. In any case, I very much doubt ~~if~~ that he could be talked into doing anything.

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I shall think more about trying to publish something on Chau, now that you've suggested it. I had originally hoped to write a book. I had to cast that aside, however, as I'm now working on another book -- trying to get it at least half-finished before I go to Tokyo -- and I'm a dreadfully slow writer. I hadn't thought that any magazine would be interested in Chau at this late date, but I could try for a revival.

Actually, as I think about it, maybe I should try the New Yorker. Do you know who the editor is who has been responsible for all the non-Shaplen Vietnam pieces they have published? They at least have the length to do justice to the Chau affair.

All the best to you,

Beth

Elizabeth Pond